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ABSTRACT

This paper responds to several social studies teachers' complaints that students are not reading on grade level, and therefore, not able to engage in classroom activities. The paper describes the development of sample lesson plans for middle school students and identifies effective assessment alternatives for teachers to use. Solutions presented in the paper are: (1) identify student needs; (2) create a nurturing environment; (3) be consistently aware of voice, tone, and gestures in communicating objectives; (4) use flexible grouping to incorporate peer interaction; (5) use a variety of materials with the text; (6) teach the organization and format of the social studies text; and (7) teach vocabulary in context with key concepts. The paper concludes with several suggestions for assessment; and provides an "analysis and synthesis game," and a lesson about civil rights. Contains a 20-item bibliography. (NKA)

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Addressing Reading Problems in Social Studies Content Area

by

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CS 013 310

PROBLEM ANALYSIS OF READING IN SOCIAL STUDIES

WRITTEN BY: MABLE F. YOUNGE

PROBLEM:

Several social studies teachers have complained that students are not reading on grade level and, therefore, not able to engage in classroom activities. Devise sample lesson plans which allow all students to participate in the class. Identify effective assessment alternatives for teachers to use.

SUMMARY:

With proper support, all students can learn to read their textbooks and participate in class activities. By recognizing their abilities, creating a nurturing climate, using flexible grouping, practicing a conversational discourse in teaching, and using a variety of visuals and manipulatives, students that do not read on grade level will have adequate support. It is equally beneficial for students to be taught how to use the organization and format of their text, and for vocabulary to be taught within the context of content concepts.

SOLUTIONS:

1. Identify student needs. Meet the students where they are. " Keep in mind that they are children and not subjects. Use multiple intelligences and learning style strategies to build on their strengths". (Bernal) Vary activities to include reading aloud, categorizing, working with pictures, rhythmic choral reading, processing bodily, interviewing and individualizing programs to address the seven styles of learning and multiple intelligences. (Hodges, 72) Plan activities that force students to translate content from one form to another. Middle schoolers are concrete thinkers, so remember if they can see it, feel it, or do it, they tend to remember it. (Middle School Journal, 123) Use computer generated activities often. Relevance also promotes motivation, as does helping students to see how skills can be applied in the real world. (Student Motivation to Learn, Eric on-line)

2. Create a nurturing environment that fosters positive interactions with students. If students experience the classroom as a caring, supportive place where there is a sense of belonging and everyone is valued and respected, they tend to participate more fully in the process of learning. (Student Motivation to Learn, Eric on-line) Keep a sense of humor and be flexible enough to change the focus if students become bored or disinterested.

3. Be consistently aware of voice, tone, and gestures in communicating objectives. Create a context of what is going to be taught. Remember classroom teaching is a social exchange. (K. Harris-Wright) Use the students frame of reference to connect objectives. Limit them, teaching for mastery. Finally keep in mind, "the best teaching comes from a conversational discourse." (K. Harris-Wright)

4. Use flexible grouping to incorporate peer interaction. Research shows that a cooperative learning environment makes a more comfortable learning environment especially for middle schoolers. Enthusiasm, motivation, good spirits, positive results, division of labor, responsibility, persistence, positive self-image and group recognition of individual efforts usually result. (Carbo and Dunn 232) Forming pairs, triads or even larger teams to introduce, reinforce, or review material, to read text or simply to have a buddy system, will allow students with deficiencies to learn from their peers, enhance their abilities and feel successful.

5. Use a variety of materials with the text. Visuals, videos, music, clothing, models, cartoons, newspapers, post cards, magazines, and items found in nature generate interest, curiosity or excitement about a chapter. Concrete materials and visual aids stir the imagination. Think of them as props and utilize them to introduce, highlight, or reinforce chapter material. Give students points for bringing in items relevant to the chapter. "Have parents contribute towards a class set of novels which relate to the unit and can be read aloud in class. This is still content but because it is not the

textbook, students get excited about reading it. Reading it one day a week keeps them enthused." (B. Lynch) Role playing, creating monologues, creative writing and journal writing can result.

6. Teach the organization and format of the social studies text. "Too often students do not realize what a valuable resource their textbook is. Some class time should be devoted to showing students how their textbook is organized." (D.Brown) Begin with the table of contents to see the logical order of the chapters and sections. Use the appendix to locate maps, charts or timelines. Find the glossary. Look in the chapters for the overview and summary. Explain what bold printed words signal. Tell students that headings are strategically placed in text to guide them through the chapter by highlighting major ideas and set the stage for reading. (Vaca, 185) Teach prereading strategies like previewing and chapter mapping. Mapping is a visual or graphic representation of key concepts or main ideas and supporting details of oral or written composition and textbook chapters. (New Directions, 10)

7. Teach vocabulary in context with key concepts. "Vocabulary is as important to content as fingerprints are to a human being. It is the language of the content area." (Vaca, 299) Research and practitioners agree that vocabulary should be introduced, developed and applied with concepts. Show students that vocabulary words are the labels for concepts. Use semantic mapping to show the relationships . This strategy will get the whole class involved and the students will be active participants throughout the lesson. Also be sure to pronounce each word clearly, and have the class model you. This will enhance their dialectal and phonetical skills. After the students gain an understanding of the words, have them create their own semantic maps or picture glossaries.

ASSESSMENT:

Research states that assessment may be defined as "any knowledge used to better understand the current knowledge that a student possesses." This implies that assessment can be as simple as a teacher's subjective judgment based on a single observation of student performance, or as complex as a five hour standardized test. (What Does Research Say About Assessment) Practitioners agree that performance based assessment allows more flexibility than a test because it can be geared to learning styles. Observing student participation as a means of assessment rewards effort. Assessing the final product mirrors the type of evaluation given in the work world. Student simulations, visual essays, scrapbooks , video presentations, or any creative work can be evaluated fairly through performance based assessment. Making students aware of the rubric, and explaining expectations clearly, promotes success. Finally performance based assessment can be individual or group oriented.

If a chapter test is planned, allow the students to generate the test questions. Teach study techniques like using index cards to write the questions on one side and the answers on the back. Use a game format for test reviews and give bonus points for the highest number of correct responses. Consider giving an oral test where students can explain the key events to the class. Finally what ever method is used, it is important that assessment is based on what the students were taught.

ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS GAME

One way to develop analysis and synthesis thinking skills and review at the same time is through a guessing game. In the game, clues are created for chapter topics and the class guesses the clues, and then play the game with the class. Or the teacher can have students choose topics and write clues, and then play the game with the class.

Objective: Review for chapter two test using the game.

Sample: Creating Clues

Topic: prehistory

Clues: 1. ancient
2. paleontologist
3. no writing

Sample: Guessing From Clues

Topic. history

Four Possible Answers

Clue #1. dates
Clue #2. events
Clue# 3. written
Answer: History

Select people, places or terms from chapter two, and write three clues that will lead to its identification. Do this for three different topics, recording your information in the spaces provided on the following clue sheet. Your first clue should be the most difficult-less well known or somewhat vague or general, and might suggest several answers. For example, if your topic was George Washington, your first clue might read " He had wooden teeth or he led troops in the Revolutionary War. Your second clue should be easier and lead to fewer possible answers, and the third clue should almost give the correct answer away. You will write four possible answers for each topic including the right answer.

Select your topics from the test pool.

artifacts	geography	anthropologist	culture
nation	colony	archaeologist	carbon dating
Hernando de Soto	excavation	Bering Strait	Paleo Period
Archaic Period	horticulture	Woodland Period	Mississippian Period

Give the class this information. Use the examples above. Design a clue sheet like the one below. Allow students to complete three. After completing the clue sheets, have students present their clues either in groups or individually for the class to guess the

answers. Remind them that these items will be on the chapter test. Observe that everyone is participating. The assessment will be based on class participation.

Topic One:_____

Four Possible Answers:_____

Clues: 1._____
2._____
3._____

Lesson two: Chapter Twelve
A New Era In Civil Rights

Objective: Using the internet compare and contrast the lives and beliefs of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois

Divide the class into pairs for using the computer. Give the directions below.

Read brief biographies of each man at these two sites.

Booker T. Washington URL:http://www.west.net/~beck/BTW.html
W.E.B. DuBois URL:http://members.tripod.com/~DuBois/biography.html

Use the information you find at these sites to complete the statements on each man. Then select one of them to write a well organized paragraph of five facts. Some statements may apply to both men.

Born in the South_____
Born in the North_____
Published in local newspaper at age 14_____
Attended Fisk University_____
Attended Hampton University_____
Worked as a janitor_____
Earned a doctoral degree from Harvard_____
Advised Presidents Roosevelt and Taft_____
Received financial support from Carnegie and Rockefeller_____
Helped found the NAACP_____
Was a college professor _____
Was a college president_____
Wrote UP FROM SLAVERY_____
Wrote THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK_____

Assessment

Participation and the final paragraphs are the basis for assessment.

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